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ABSTRACT

Children need to share their personal lives with other persons in a relationship of mutual respect and responsiveness: i.e., in a relationship of love. Children are an end, not a means, people to be valued for their own sakes. Adults must help children to know who they are and who they can become. Values contribute to the fulfillment of a person's needs. In the value crisis that exists today, parents and teachers are confused and some of them have begun to doubt time honored principles and their application. Areas of confusion include the authoritarianism versus permissivism dilemma, the problem of the relationship between values and morals, the absence of objective criteria for evaluating what is good and bad in human actions, and the prevalence of relativist morality. Values are taught at school whether directly or indirectly. The intention of programs in values education is to help teachers and pupils examine the values being communicated by the school, by agencies like television, radio, and other community groups, and to arrive at reasoned, open processes for clarifying and improving value judgments. A child develops values: (1) through the relationship with teachers and other pupils, (2) through subject matter, and (3) through techniques and strategies such as values clarification, kits for teaching moral values through behavior modification, transactional analysis, etc. Home and school form a partnership in helping a child develop values. Mutual respect and understanding, communication and dialogue are essential elements of this partnership. (JMB)

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A CHILD'S WORLD OF VALUES

Paper Given at the 5th Annual
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Association for Young Children
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A CHILD'S WORLD OF VALUES

A hundred twenty-five years ago, the great French educator Dupanloup summed up his feelings about a child thus: "Today, after twenty-five years of devotion to the work of education, when I ask myself what is the profoundest conviction I have gained and still maintain, it is a deep feeling of respect and reverence for the child"[1].

In another context he writes: "I respect human freedom in the least child more religiously than in a mature man because at least the latter knows how to defend it against me, the child cannot do so"[2]. The words of Dupanloup serve as an introduction to our topic.

Who Is a Child?

A child is a person with a unique identity whose personal status implies that he is intelligent and free, that he enjoys the full dignity of a human being, a dignity inherent in the sacred character of human life, and as Gabriel Marcel says:

> We cannot succeed in preserving the mysterious principle at the heart of human dignity unless we succeed in making explicit the properly sacred character peculiar to it, a quality which appears all the more clearly when we consider the human being in his nudity and weakness, the human being as helpless as the child, the old man or the pauper.[3]

A child is a person who needs the companionship of other human beings. In order to live and grow as a person he needs to share his personal life with other persons in a relationship of mutual respect and responsiveness, in other words in a relationship of love. Here I am not referring to love as a maudlin

thing but as a quality of unselfish human goodness and concern for oneself and for others. This word is very popular today, almost overused, but how many of us really stop to think of what love really means. It is the unifying force which gives meaning to life and to human relationships and it ultimately ensures that every good action becomes a true expression of the sacred within us.

A child is not an angel. He can be naughty; he gets into mischief; he has to be corrected, reprimanded and at times punished. Love allows us to do all these things since it is based on the value which is inherent in true freedom in each and every human being. Augustine's motto says it all:

Love and do what you will!

In similar fashion, we overuse the word freedom without fully comprehending its meaning. It is through human freedom that we can determine ourselves in such a way that our life expression becomes meaningful for ourselves and for others. Freedom is not license to do our own thing regardless of whether our own thing interferes with the freedom of another. Our freedom has limits. To be free is to be responsible and we will approach true freedom in proportion as we lose ourselves in something greater than ourselves.

A child is an end, not a means, a person to be valued for his own sake. Sir John Adams makes an interesting statement about childhood in this regard:

> Childhood has a meaning and a value in itself apart from its value as a step on the way to maturity. The better the child, that is, the truer he is to his child nature, the better man will he make when the proper time comes[4].

A child is to be seen in his totality and unity - a person in his material existence, in his interpersonal and social relationships and in his transcendent dimension. There can be human fulness only if these aspects are integrated.

A child fs smaller than we are; he makes mistakes; he is easy to push

around. We often do his thinking for him and we answer his questions before he asks them. We do not permit him freedom to think and we assume that he does not see things as clearly as we do. It is conceivable that he sees them more clearly as his mind is fresh and uncluttered by our adult clichés. Is it possible that we may be underestimating a child's ability to think?

As adults we must help a child to know the person he is and the person he can become; to know of what value he is, what his purpose in life is, what true freedom is and how free he is and how he can make the best of himself at the stage he has reached. If we try to start him too far ahead of where he is, we lose him and he loses himself and us. There is a variety of ways in which a child may get lost. Let us look at some of those ways.

While none of us would wilfully harm a child, we do at times show a sort of indifference to him without meaning to, and we all know, as George Bernard Shaw so aptly says, the worst sin toward our fellow men is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them, that's the essence of inhumanity. Indifference to a child is no less damaging. The harm to which I am referring is not physical, it is psychological, spiritual if you will. The nineteenth century Swiss writer Amiel reminds us that an education system which is harmful to intelligence is bad; an education system which is harmful to character is vicious; an education system which is harmful to conscience is criminal.

In an age of gatherings, we educators meet and discuss teaching, teachers, curriculum, administration, salaries, methods, technology, and the hundred and one other problems which preoccupy our thoughts in education today and all too often a child has no place in our discussions. Of course, there is always an implied child, but who of us likes to be considered merely an implied somebody.

There are occasions when a child becomes for us a philosophical abstraction. We philosophize about his human dignity, his freedom, the respect

due him, and so on, all beautiful concepts, but at times we have difficulty in translating our thinking into concrete action when we find ourselves face to face with a child in his existential situation.

There are other occasions when a child becomes a statistic with his personal identity lost in a maze of numbers, in an amalgam of subjects about whom data are gathered, analyzed and interpreted. At a time when there is so much emphasis on measurement and accountability and when education has become a popular interest ground for economics, psychology, sociology, politics, and others, a child can easily be lost. I am not knocking research in those disciplines because the more research we have on the measureable aspects of human behaviour, the better will we understand education, or is it schooling, training, learning? Perhaps we need to define our terms more precisely. My concern is that we do not assume that all aspects of a child are amenable to measurement and objective evaluation. We may become so preoccupied with what can be measured that we overlook what cannot be. In a recent television program, Arnold Toynbee in a conversation taped before his death, spoke of this very danger, that of attempting to translate into comprehensible terms the incomprehensible. The philosopher Marcel[5] says much the same thing. He speaks of our attempts to reduce the mystery in man to the level of problem with the assumption that there can be a solution to a problem. He speaks of one's obligation as a person to transcend the mass of data that is accumulated on other persons and to be aware of what lies beyond objective evaluation. All this has relevance for us when we speak of values.

Some of the statements coming through the media from certain segments of the Women's Liberation Movement may be considered questionable from a child's point of view and they could perhaps cause a child to think that he is not wanted, that he is a burden, an inconvenience, that he is being tagged with the

dollar sign, and that one's value depends on what one has, rather than on who one is. I am not rapping the Women's Liberation Movement as such, as I agree with Article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that all human beings (and I include men and women) are born free and equal in dignity and rights; I agree with equality before the law for men and women; I agree with equal opportunity for employment for men and women and for equal opportunity for pay for employment and for promotion and advancement; and I know the historical distortions that have taken place especially at the pen of certain philosophers and theologians. Having conceded all these things, I still say that we should give serious consideration to what we can do to a child by our unguarded remarks; we can alienate him, we can cause him to question our love for him and I recall that it has been said that juvenile delinquency is the revenge of the innocent for the lack of love in the world!

What Do We Mean by Values?

So far, I have been speaking of a child but actually I have been speaking about values because a topic which touches on human relationships is in itself value laden. What do we mean by value? It may not be so easy to define but it may be acceptable to describe a value[6] as a good which contributes to the fulfillment of a person's needs. And to speak of values implies that we speak of norms. We can make this distinction between values and norms:

> 'Value' refers to the understanding of a certain good for an individual or society which is considered worthy of realization. 'Norm' refers to the manner and the limits within which the concrete realization of the value is possible... There is an obvious interdependence between value and norm. The norm gives a description of the value, while the value imposes certain limits on the norm. To dress decently and respectably is a value at all times...[7]

but, the interpretation of "decently" and "respectably" varies with the times. It may be added that if we want to search for norms for free human conduct, we

can go only to one source, namely, the values of the human person in his total perspective. It might also be added that it is impossible to talk about values and norms without a reference to conscience, the ultimate norm of human responsibility. With all due regard for the importance of objective values and norms and their concrete formulation in human society, in the final analysis, it is one's personal conscience which is ultimately decisive in one's judgment about the morality of a human action. The formation of a child's conscience becomes of great concern to parents and teachers.

There seems to be general agreement today that a value crisis exists. A plethora of writings has come forward to deal with the problem, its origins, and ways in which it manifests itself and there is no lack of suggestions for ways out. Parents and teachers are confused and some of them have begun to doubt time-honoured principles and their application. One thing, though, is certain, there is no instant panacea which anyone can offer as a cure for the values malaise in our society. There have never been so many words in the book-market as there are today about ways of coping with this problem. It is possible that there may be too many instant experts with instant and simplistic answers to very complex questions. On the other hand, what is simple can be made to appear complex.

Some of the reasons given for the present crisis situation are the following:

The problem of authoritarianism versus permissivism. It has been suggested[8] as a result of changes in society and group process, that many teachers have moved from an old authoritarian role to a permissive non-directive role, with the result that they now involve pupils ad nauseam in the formulation of questions because they are afraid to provide the information which the questions demand. They are failing to step in when action on their part is called for.

They have been removed from one horn of the dilemma to become impaled on the other. It is further suggested that they need to assume responsibility in relation to a child without usurping a child's responsibility. Parents as well as teachers have been caught with the same dilemma. The problem may not be too serious at the more junior levels of the elementary school, but it does manifest itself towards the upper levels.

Confusion exists as to the values-morals relationship. There are values that are moral; there are those that are not. The experts sometimes do not confront questions such as: What is it to be moral? What are moral principles? What is their source? There are all kinds of suggestions about how to teach values but since there is little if any attempt to answer some of these questions, teaching of values and morals becomes reduced to strategies and techniques, the how to do it thing. I am not minimizing the difficulty of trying to arrive at precise and satisfactory definitions for concepts relating to values and morals. Let us, for example, take the word morality. It may be described[9] as the science of what man ought to be by reason of who he is; this description takes into account the reality of man as well as his human task and destiny. Or, it may be described as the science of right and wrong, good and bad in human conduct. I merely point out here that there is a real difficulty.

There is an absence of objective criteria for evaluating what is good and what is bad in human actions. Wilson[10] writing of statements relative to values, describes the problem in some such fashion as this: There are statements which can be evaluated objectively, namely imperative or opinion statements, empirical statements and analytic statements; there are those that cannot, namely value statements and metaphysical statements. For an imperative or opinion statement there is no expectation of verification; for empirical and

analytic statements, we know what the statements mean, how to verify them and we have good reason for believing them; for value statements and metaphysical statements, such as honesty, justice, truth, etc., objective criteria are missing. Surely though, all of us have some notion of what makes a good man or woman, and after centuries of a search for truth, goodness and beauty, we have some notion of what they mean. The golden rule as a value principle must mean something to us or if we wish to seek our source in Scripture we can find one in Matthew 22, 37-39, You must love your neighbour as yourself. The farmer who said recently on an interview on a radio program that he thinks he is being immoral when he harms another human being may not be schooled in some of the learned disciplines, but he knew what he was talking about.

Some teachers are afraid of taking a stand on values-moral issues in case they will be accused of introducing religion into the classroom if they make a judgment on the moral nature of a child's action. In a public school situation this can become an explosive issue. Also, there is the omnipresent fear of indoctrination. Isn't it a strange thing that we can indoctrinate pupils in the basic knowledge of other school subjects without recrimination, but let a teacher use the same approach in values-moral teaching, and there is a hue and cry. I ask the question: Is indoctrination, every form of it, all wrong? Should I find fault with a parent, for instance, who uses what might be called a form of indoctrination to introduce the tenets of Christian morality to a child? I am assuming that a rational discussion takes place between child and parent. Why are some parents and some teachers afraid to take a stand on such issues? If basic values exist, do we not have a duty to transmit them rather than hold a policy of studied neutrality? This is a question that each one of us has to answer? It should be possible to avoid blatant indoctrination without accepting a neutral role. For a child who is being introduced to the world around him,

should we offer a compass or a map?

Relativist morality is another phenomenon in today's society. The line of least resistance is to have no standards at all, nothing is right or wrong unless we think it is. Or nothing is right or wrong unless we feel it is. Ernest Hemingway expresses this latter position well: I know only what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after. I am not denying that we may feel good after a good act and bad after a bad one, but is it feeling that determines morality? I am not denying to us our feelings but are they wholly the norm for determining what is right or what is wrong. Is doing our own thing the answer? Another question which is raised is: Does knowing the right ensure that one will do the right? These are all questions which are causing confusion today and we do not seem to have any ready answers.

Can Values Be Taught?

Can values be taught? Whether the school elects to teach values or not, values are what a child picks up in school from the first day he enters the classroom. Perhaps often values are caught rather than taught. Schools communicate values by the kind of life they provide for their pupils. They communicate values even when they say they do not.

The intention of programs in values education is to help teachers and pupils to examine the values being communicated by the school, by agencies like television, radio and other community groups, and to arrive at reasoned, open processes for clarifying and improving value judgments. It is assumed that teachers are primarily to aid the pupils in their valuing process and not to indoctrinate them in a set of beliefs and a set line of conduct.

How Does a Child Develop Values?

How does a child develop values? By the very fact that in a school there are human beings relating to other human beings, values are being communicated. There are three ways of developing values that I will discuss and I am putting them in an order of priority which is an expression of a value on my part:

1. Through the atmosphere of the classroom and the example of the teacher;
2. Through subject matter; and
3. Through specific techniques and strategies.

A child develops values through the relationships he has with his teachers and other pupils in a community atmosphere of belonging and companionship. For the moment, I am going to assume that a classroom is just such a community where human beings live and work and play together for a portion of each school day; where person is resonant to person in mutual concern, not only for common interests, but also for the privacy each cherishes; where peace and joy prevail and when I say joy I mean joy and not necessarily pleasure - the two are not synonymous though they are often confused; where trust and faith generate hope and love; where sensitivity, compassion and tolerance for others go far beyond the walls of the classroom to embrace the children of the world; where the value of work, habits of work, pride in work well done and a sense of duty bring home to a child the reality of the world in which he lives; where love of the arts and the beautiful touch the deepest human emotions and stir the imagination of a child; where sensitivity towards all living things and respect for and appreciation of the environment forge a link with the physical environment of which he is a part; where a child learns self-control, independence in choice, in judgment, in ability to express his thoughts; where he develops the courage to stand up against the group for the right when he thinks he is right; where there is time

for reflection, for self-appraisal; where there is encouragement for a child to search for the truth, to test the evidence; where above all he learns to give and take under the guidance of a teacher who cares, who has a fairness, a firmness, a sincerity and a concern that have a realness and presence that come through to a child.

You may say this is a description of an ideal classroom and an ideal teacher. I agree, but can we forego the ideal? If we are serious about developing values in our children do we have a choice other than to provide the atmosphere where human values can grow and flourish under the guidance of caring teachers.

I know all sorts of practical questions dealing with day to day distresses can be raised: pupil-teacher ratio, finances or lack of them, quality of teachers, time for teaching the basics, and a host of others. An answer to those practical questions is not in conflict with the ideals envisaged for developing values. For example, teaching the basics is a value, always has been. We may need to reassess what we mean by basics just as we may need to reassess a number of our educational concepts. Does our definition of education need to be reformulated? As adults, are our expectations of education realistically attuned to the present or the future, or are we living in the good old days and are we still hoping that our children can become replicas of ourselves? I am not suggesting for a moment that everything that is old is necessarily no good. Let us hope that some of the old values are still viable, and will continue to be.

The teaching of values through subject matter in the elementary school has never been disputed. Traditionally such content subjects as literature (reading in the early grades), history, social studies, have always provided a vehicle for the passing on of values and today they are no less important. I

think we can agree that in the teaching of these subjects, a teacher recognizes a facts level, an understanding level, and let us say a values level. If a child is going to think through value situations, it is to be hoped that he has his facts at hand as well as an understanding of what they mean. Too often a child tries to form judgments and make decisions in a vacuum because too often discussion becomes a case of the blind leading the blind: guidance is missing. There is also the case where teaching stops when facts are mastered and ideas remain in a state of inertia.

There is no subject in the elementary school curriculum that does not lend itself to values teaching. Take science, for example. Even with a very small child a teacher can appeal to his sense of wonder, his natural curiosity, his sense of order and in a very elementary fashion introduce him to the scientific method, increasing his experiences as he progresses from level to level, mindful of the principle that at each level things learned at a previous level are maintained and extended. In like manner, mathematics has potential for teaching values. By the time a child leaves the elementary school, he should have an appreciation of the structure of the number system and its order. This discipline in itself is a value.

In the elementary school there seems to be more time to do more things that are novel and interesting; teachers do not seem to be inhibited by the same pressures that weigh down some secondary school teachers who must get a prescribed body of knowledge covered in a prescribed time. An elementary teacher has time to allow a child in Toynbee's words, to play around with ideas. You will recall from Up the Down Staircase that Bel Kaufman speaks of listening to the "sound of thinking". This is what a teacher in the elementary school has time to do; whether it is done is another matter. What greater value is there than having a child listen to the sounds of thinking.

Underlying all we have been saying about thinking and valuing, is the assumption that there is a teacher who knows and cares. While we may all agree that great things are being done in elementary classrooms and there are many caring teachers, we do not have enough of them. Since the hope of the future depends on what is happening now in the elementary schools, we should be prepared to pay any price (and I am not talking only in monetary terms) to recruit and prepare teachers for safeguarding our children's future.

We may need to take a second look at the way we are preparing teachers. Have we been emphasizing the wrong things? Now that standards for admission to teacher education institutions have been raised, we can start doing what we consider the right things. Should we not be concentrating more on the personal development of teachers, on helping them to come to terms with their humanhood, on preparing them to meet challenges like the values crisis in classrooms. This can be done, hopefully, without neglecting techniques, methods, the know-how of teaching. If values are to be effectively taught through subject matter in the elementary school, more quality teachers are needed.

In recent years, a strategies or techniques approach to values education has been gathering momentum and like all new approaches, it appears to be assuming bandwagon proportions. This is where we are now - we have values clarification, kits for teaching moral values through behaviour modifications[12], transactional analysis, and so on. I am not going to criticize any of these, I would not be unkind to earnest, sincere people who are trying to meet a great need today, but I would like to suggest a caveat. We belong to an <u>ersatz</u> society; we have become used to substitutes for so many things, for example, for sugar a pill, for vitamins a pill, the list of substitutes is endless. We may be tempted to do the same thing in values education. We have a crisis, we want an

instant solution and we go in search for a technique which will give us a quick answer. There is no quick answer. There is no substitute for a good home, a good school, a good parent, a good teacher. I am not going to define good here - I am assuming you know exactly what I mean. But, given the real situation as we have it when so many children have less than a good environment, a teacher has no choice but to use whatever helps are available to make up for the value vacuum.

Having given this caveat, I shall now attempt to give the positive side of these techniques. They are means and like all means are commendable as long as ends and means are kept in proper perspective. They can be very helpful to a teacher to bring current value issues before pupils. Values clarification in vogue right now, has been described as techniques and strategies which a teacher uses to help pupils to develop and clarify values, or a process by which a teacher helps pupils to perceive the bases for their decisions or actions. At the upper elementary levels, a knowledgeable teacher can use this technique very effectively by choosing with the pupils, situations in which values are involved and directing them through the various steps outlined. A full discussion of values clarification would take a much longer time than we have today. Suffice it to say values clarification is here, we must know what are the strengths and what the limitations. The same caution may be extended to behaviour modification and transactional analysis techniques - these means can be very effective as means, but out of bounds they can leave us engulfed in absolutist relativity.

How Do Home and School Relate in Helping a Child to Develop Values?

Home and school form a partnership in helping a child develop values. Mutual respect and understanding, communication and dialogue are essential elements of this partnership and as in all partnerships it takes both sides to make it work.

Mutual respect implies that parents respect the rights of teachers and that teachers respect the rights of parents. Parents have a right to know what values are being taught to their child and by whom, but they have the responsibility not to interfere unnecessarily with the work of the classroom. On the other hand, a teacher has a right to professional autonomy and at the same time, the responsibility to keep parents informed of what is being done in values education, and this includes responsibility for informing them of new developments, techniques, etc., and in fact, for consulting them in these matters. Both have a duty to ensure that no child will be caught between their inconsistencies, should there be any - this can cause irreparable harm to a small child. The intelligence, the character, the conscience of a child represent a sacred trust to both parents and teachers, and it is a terrible thing as Amiel says, to harm any one of them.

Parents and teachers can help one another in adjusting to the great social changes which have taken place and are continuing to take place. In dialogue they should be able to work out ways and means of adjusting to a child's world with its values - it is not their world of yesterday or even of today, and the child's world of the future will be different still. As never before, a sense of community between school and home is imperative, if adequate adjustments are to be made. A renewal is long overdue in education. Only in this way will real change come. By renewal, I mean an inner change, a liberation of the human spirit.

We have built more buildings, gathered more equipment and other kinds of hardware and we are less than satisfied with the results. With all these physical changes, with emphasis on measurement, evaluation, accountability, efficiency, technology, behavioural objectives, utilitarianism, positivism, to mention a few of a long litany of modern clichés, we are moving at a rapid pace towards 1984, and the only thing that will keep us from the brink is renewal in education.

Renewal will come when first of all we as parents and educators, free ourselves to be who we are and then we liberate children to be who they are with all that true freedom connotes and that is the liberty of the children of God.

I would like to end by sharing with you Kahlil Gibran's "On Children" taken from The Prophet.

October 26,1979

Mary Mulcahy, Ph.D.

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as he loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

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